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ON BRANCH

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10 JUL 1959

MEMORANDUM FOR THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE

Subject: Relative Military Capabilities in the  
1959-1961/62 Time Period (U)

1. It is the view of the Joint Chiefs of Staff that during FY 1960 the military capability of the United States vis-a-vis the Soviet Union provides the most favorable basis for political negotiation by the United States that is likely to exist within the foreseeable future. Through 1960, the atomic retaliatory forces of the United States will continue to provide a capability to inflict such loss and damage upon the enemy as to achieve a significant margin of advantage which, if exploited effectively in conjunction with other military operations, would permit the United States and its Allies to prevail in general war.

2. Despite continued improvement in the quality and posture of the forces of the United States and its Allies as presently programmed and within current expectation for FY's 1961 and 1962, Soviet technological advances will probably continue to diminish the margin of U.S. military superiority. By the end of this period, with a continuance of present trends and programs on both sides, and with no major technological breakthroughs on either side in the intervening years, the most probable position will be that of each side having military strength of potentially decisive proportions with an advantage, possibly conclusive, to the side taking the initiative.

3. A primary factor in this judgment is the growing Soviet scientific and technological capacity which has attained stature comparable to that of the United States, coupled with the demonstrated ability of the Soviet Union

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to achieve quantitative advantage in new and potentially decisive weapons systems.

4. In summary, we are now in a relatively better position than the USSR to negotiate from a position of military strength; our negotiating position in this regard is deteriorating and it does not appear that we will retain this advantage into the period under consideration.

For the Joint Chiefs of Staff:

SIGNED

ADMIRAL BURKE,  
Chief of Naval Operations.

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(Approved 10 July 1959)

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